DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 228 886 FL 013 675

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TITLE Language and Cultural Skills for Travel Industry Managers.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Bilingual Bicultural Education Conference (12th, Washington, DC, February 15-19, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Chinese Culture; College Second Language Programs; Communicative Competence (Languages); Cultural Education; *French; Higher Education; Hispanic American Culture; *Hospitality Occupations; Intercultural Communication; *Japanese; *Languages for Special Purposes; Listening Skills; *Mandarin Chinese; Second Language Instruction; *Spanish; Tourism
IDENTIFIERS *University of Hawaii

ABSTRACT

Program objectives and assessment results of language courses taught at the School of Travel Industry Management (TIM) of the University of Hawaii are discussed. In addition to preparing students to speak with employees and clientele in Mandarin, Japanese, French, and Spanish, these courses include the study of cultural practices and values that affect the hospitality industry, the organization of companies, and business protocol in countries where the target languages are spoken. Speaking and listening are emphasized in all classes. Reading and writing are treated differently in the French and Spanish classes than in the Japanese and Mandarin classes. Evaluations indicated that TIM students are able to carry on meaningful conversations with greater confidence than students in traditional classrooms. TIM students also have greater understanding of the role of language and culture in international business pursuits, and are motivated to use the specific types of structure and vocabulary in the lessons. It is suggested that knowledge of these languages by travel industry managers in Hawaii will help attract more tourists from Japan, Latin America, and Europe. Additionally, it is concluded that the approach of developing curricula that start with communication in specific situations and that end with identifying needed structures and vocabulary is crucial to achieving the goals of the special language courses. (SW)

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL SKILLS FOR TRAVEL INDUSTRY MANAGERS

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The travel industry, which is clearly international in scope, demands the development of specialists in the languages and cultures of a widely varied clientele. Hawaii provides a specific example of a location where international business has "created jobs that call for specialist language, technical, and cultural skills." Furthermore, "use of these skills perpetuates and reinforces Hawaii's ethnic heritage and its historic links with Asia" (Addison 1982:1).

In order to better prepare students for careers as travel industry managers, the School of Travel Industry Management and two language departments at the University of Hawaii have begun to offer special courses in Mandarin, Japanese, French, and Spanish. In addition to preparing students to speak with employees and clientele in languages other than English, these courses include the study of cultural practices and values that affect the hospitality industry, the organization of companies, and business protocol in countries where the target languages are spoken.

Planning and development of the four courses began in December, 1981 and intensified during the summer of 1982. Special courses in the four target languages were offered for the first time in Fall 1982. These were introductory level courses and students had very little or no knowledge of the target language. A second semester course in each language was offered in Spring 1983. The sequence was repeated in 1983-84.

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The School of Travel Industry Management (TIM) has added the study of a second language to its graduation requirements. The special language courses will be one way to fulfill this requirement. Furthermore, because of the heavy cultural component of the courses, students may also use these courses in partial fulfillment of the humanities requirement in the general education core of their degree of Bachelor of Business Administration in TIM. Traditional language courses cannot be used in this way. The School of TIM is now the only unit within the College of Business Administration to require second language study.

OBJECTIVES OF TIM LANGUAGE COURSES

The initial goal of all four language courses was:

> To enable students who plan to work in tourism-oriented businesses to communicate and interact effectively with those they service through acquisition of a basic understanding and knowledge of another language and culture.

This goal was written before the courses were taught. I believe everyone involved is now prepared to revise this goal so that the projected range of communication would include fellow managers and subordinates. In the Mandarin class, for example, the final examination for the first semester was an interview between a job applicant and a restaurant manager. Each student had to participate in an interview twice, playing a different role each time.

Speaking and listening, the most difficult of the four language skills, were stressed in all classes. Reading and writing were treated differently in the French and Spanish classes from the way these skills were handled in Japanese and Mandarin for the obvious reason that different orthographies are involved in the

latter. While the inclusion of some reading and writing will be evaluated, furthering oral/aural skills will continue to be weighted more heavily than reading and writing.

The cultural component of the courses seeks to develop the "ability to indicate reasons for some general characteristics of tourists in terms of social customs, ways of thinking, and values; ability to demonstrate an awareness of cultural nuances in the language and in normal behavior; ability to demonstrate an awareness of how social variables like age, sex, class, education, and occupation affect language use." (Spreen 1981)

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE TIM LANGUAGE PROGRAM

The first student evaluation of the language courses was conducted at the end of the first semester. The students seemed to enjoy the classes and to feel that they were learning what they wanted to learn. In reviewing the evaluations, especially the students' comments, it is important to understand some characteristics of TIM students. They are all undergraduates. Many worked in the travel industry before entering the program; all must work in the industry to complete internship requirements for the B.B.A. in Travel Industry Management. They tend to be career-oriented, a trait that should be expected among students in any professional school. In this context, one can understand the interest of one student in learning "anything that can help me in (the) hotel and restaurant (field)". (All quotations come from the students' written evaluations of the courses.)

Starting with highly motivated students is of course an ideal point of

departure. Such students, however, also have very specific ideas about what will help them achieve their goals. To a large extent the courses included material that coincided with student interest. One result that was not discussed in the early planning but which the language professors started to notice during the first semester was that the students in these courses were learning much more in certain skill and content areas than students in traditional classes. Four areas appeared to develop differently in the TIM language courses from the development one could expect in traditional language classes. It is worthwhile to point out here that a similar comparison has been made between a standard class in Samoan and a special course in beginning Samoan designed for nurses and social workers and given for the first time at the University of Hawaii in summer 1982 (Mayer 1982).

I will look now at the four areas of difference and at some of the possible reasons for them.

1. Greater control of basic structures and of a greater variety of structures.

   Motivation plays a major role in all learning and the students in these classes were motivated to use the specific types of structures and vocabulary that were being taught.

   Reduction of certain forms or certain activities which were not useful to conversation resulted in greater concentration on those forms and activities that are useful. This meant that more repetition of basic structures was possible resulting in greater control. Examples of forms that were not taught but which would be taught in traditional first semester course are the literary tenses in French. An example of an activity which was omitted in the TIM language course is the learning of

characters in Chinese. This activity requires significant amounts of time in traditional classes. Chinese character recognition is included in the second semester course. How much time should be alloted to this area in both the Chinese and the Japanese classes is currently being considered.

2. Capability to converse meaningfully.

   Because all use of language in TIM language classes was restricted to situations that approximated real life, students were able to develop ability to carry on meaningful conversations. The instructors report that they can do so better than students who have completed a semester of traditional language teaching.

3. Greater confidence and ease in speaking.

   One of the problems in language teaching is often getting students to speak up and reveal what they know (or do not know). This seemed to be easier in the TIM language classes. Possible reasons include common interests among the students due to their similar professional goals and the experimental nature of the language classes. Both of these factors may have encouraged the students to feel (as one student wrote) like "participants in the learning process."

4. Greater understanding of the role of language and culture in successful international business pursuits.

Many of the students enrolled in the TIM language course seem to be developing an awareness of the crucial role of language and culture in the potential for success of any business venture. In a service industry such as tourism, failure to attract and satisfy

customers frequently is linked to communication impasse. Since this is true even when all parties speak the same language, it should be especially obvious when patrons, service personnel, and management do not share the same linguistic and cultural traditions. Students should understand the nature of the problems that result in the latter cases; what they learn in the TIM language courses should suggest remedies for such difficulties.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

All special language courses need specific kinds of promotion among the intended audience. This is true of the course in Samoan for nurses and social workers and it is true for the TIM language courses. The use of coercion in the form of graduation requirements such as the TIM School will begin to use in Fall 1983 will help, but other marketing techniques are also necessary. The School of TIM is firmly committed to international studies and this commitment is clear in many of our courses.

Guest speakers can provide an excellent means of focusing student attention on the international aspects of the travel industry. For example, one of the introductory courses has as one of its goals a review of travel industry occupations. A recent guest speaker works for one of the largest companies which design, promote, and sell tours to visitors. Her command of five languages is a fundamental requirement of her job as a tour coordinator. Her firsthand experience illustrates the role of languages other than English in successful development of a career in the travel industry.

Considering the extent of Hawaii's dependence on Japan for incoming tourists, one would think that the need for Japanese-speaking personnel would be obvious to everyone. This is clearly not the case. Those companies who have Japanese-speaking sales managers do well in attracting tour groups from Japan. Others choose to ignore the Japanese market entirely and generally fare less well when traffic from the U.S. Mainland and Canada slows down. As recently as February of 1983, travel industry managers on Kauai (one of the four major islands in the state) were told that they cannot hope to attract more Japanese tourists to their island without increasing the number of Japanese-speaking personnel (Chang 1983:6).

The Latin American and European markets are also expanding as more speakers of languages such as German, French (especially Canadian French), Spanish, and Portuguese travel to Hawaii (First Hawaiian Bank 1982). In providing services for these groups, language skills are vital since few of these travelers speak English. In addition, each group has specific preferences. Mexicans, for example, prefer to purchase all-inclusive tours with few optional excursions. Germans, on the other hand, are often experienced travelers and prefer to get around on their own even though their English is limited. All groups like to be met at the airport by someone who speaks their language (Segami 1982:28).

The School of TIM feels that part of its responsibility to its students is to make them aware of these needs in the tourist industry. Of course, Hawaii is a case in point. The special language classes can help to develop the necessary awareness. There is a shortage of materials to teach the types of courses being developed in this program. Of course, the professors in the TIM language program have made an excellent beginning and their work continues.

One of the challenges has been to develop truly interdisciplinary courses. On one hand, the TIM professors are not accustomed to thinking about the kinds of conversations that go on in the travel industry. On the other, the language professors expected to first design a grammatical curriculum - a list of structure and vocabulary items - and then to write bits of short dialogue to illustrate points of structure.

For the TIM language courses, they had to reverse this process. First, specific situations were described. These included communication in settings such as a travel agency or a hotel and in contexts such as conducting an employment interview or helping a client choose a tour. The next step was to design dialogs to allow students to communicate in these situations. The final step was identifying needed structures and vocabulary. We tried various ways to bridge the gap between disciplines. Introductory TIM language texts were loaned to the language professors and the TIM School arranged for the language instructors to take a "field trip" to talk to managers at hotels. In addition, TIM professors commented on the course syllabi as they were being designed and a number of meetings were held to discuss progress.

How well the language professors succeeded in capturing the reality of the travel industry is reflected in student comments, such as, "practical", "appropriate", "relevant", "applicable", "gives just enough so you can handle yourself", and "Special content is very useful. Knowing one area well is better than learning a lot and remembering nothing."

An important element in the success of the current four courses is the focus on speaking and listening. One student seemed to believe that a conversational approach allowed language learning to take place without emphasis on "grammar and structure." He apparently felt that if grammatical structure was not overtly

pointed out and discussed, it was in fact not being taught. His ignorance of the notion that meaningful linguistic communication necessarily involves use of "grammar and structure" allows one to conclude that he was learning the target language as language is best learned--as a vehicle to express ideas.

The fact that conversation fulfills a special set of communication needs has been discussed in the literature (Iwamura 1981). This is true for the native speaker and for the language learner. Conversation is known to perform different functions for different cultural groups (Cook-Gumperz 1978; Ervin-Tripp and Mitchell-Kernan 1977; Gumperz 1977; Fillmore 1980; Heath 1980). Language forms and functions also vary among specialists and between specialists and non-specialists (American Anthropological Association 1981).

The curriculum development procedure described above which started with identification of specific settings is crucial to the feasibility of special language courses, especially at the introductory level. It must be recognized, however, that complete studies of language as it is used in a specific setting (a front desk at a hotel, for example) by a specific group (elderly Japanese farmers on their first trip outside Japan) have not been done. Such research is probably beyond the resources of those who design language courses in academic settings. Nevertheless, the successful use of specific functions of the target language as a basis for determining curriculum design illustrates by example the fact that language and experience are inseparable. Students can begin to observe in the language classroom that language, significant as it is, is never isolated from the context of experience. As one student wrote, "It is not only a learning process but also an experience to be able to participate and gain valuable information about our target language."

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